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Sum ex iis qui mirer antiquos: non tamen, ut quidam, temporum nostrorum ingenia despicio. — PLIN.

My admiration for antiquity does not blind me to the genius of modern days.

"I have searched, admired, and studied antiquity," says Pithou, a distinguished French advocate & man of letters, of the 16th century, in his last "Testament," — "too much to become the dupe of novelties." The last words of wisdom & experience ought to be respected; and we shall in general find, that this sentiment, the result of a life of observation, holds true throughout the world.

But there is also a danger, that this sentiment may be carried too far. In many men much affectation is evinced in this particular. They pretend to pay their adoration to the ages of antiquity, taking it for granted, that all the discoveries of modern times are useless and of no avail. They sigh over the wreck of the past, but despair of ever seeing its like again.

Splendid as have been the actions and achievements of the days of yore, and much as we must ever venerate them, we must yet confess that they warrant no such enthusiasm as some evince. If, according to the theories of a few pseudo-philosophers, man is on the decline from his state of lofty eminence; if society, and arts, and sciences, are fading with the revolution of ages, we grant that such an enthusiastic

reverence for antiquity is more than pardonable – it is commendable. But is the mind of man to be limited by particular ages? Is that spirit, which is destined to bloom forever, when all of earth has past away, to be in a continued state of progressive degradation? – That we have degenerated from the inhabitants of Eden, none will deny; – but if the light of advancing centuries, if the researches of unnumbered minds, laboring upon the researches of their predecessors, if the voice of experience, and the annals of wisdom, are to be laid aside, because antiquity was ignorant of them, then we might sit down at once, neglect every exertion, and content ourselves with the scanty knowledge the 'times of old' can afford us.

Even allowing that the mind of man has suffered a progressive diminution of its powers, a position

however which we by no means are willing to believe, yet it must be evident that the knowledge of our race must be on the advance. The sciences of the ancient were confessedly ~~imperfect~~ confused, their arts imperfect, their knowledge limited. To us, is spread a wider and a more glorious field. The inventions of modern days have unlocked the portals of information in every department of human research. And are we to revert to antiquity in preference? —

We have perhaps wandered from the immediate subject in hand. But our feelings were irritated at the thought of the conduct of many men on this head. We cannot but deplore the infatuation which looks to antiquity for every thing which is necessary in life. We cannot but mourn that any exist, so blind and so ~~[illegible]~~ shut to

improvement, as to despise every thing which has not the dust of days long fled remaining upon it.

Many however are apt to run into the opposite extreme, and to become "the dupe of novelties," merely because they will not reverence antiquity. Had they, like the distinguished Frenchman already mentioned, studied what they despise, they would learn to appreciate the value of the new object of their admiration. They would be able to apply the experience of the past to the exigencies of the present, and not be carried away by things which time may prove unprofitable, if not worse. They would see in what antiquity was deficient; in what her knowledge was imperfect; in what she required a ~~her~~ stronger light than ever shone around her.

Indeed, if ~~both~~ the admirers of both extremes would candidly &

impartially consider the subject, they would perceive that the history of all nations points out the fallacy of both opinions. They would behold man universally acting upon this simple principle, — to profit by the experience of the past, and take advantage of the discoveries of the present. In this manner nations have arisen, and advanced to lofty degrees of civilisation. If according to one side of the question, we are to neglect the study of antiquity, we may at once recommence all art & science. Man must be, by this mode of conduct, always a beginner; and by the other method, he must be likewise forever lingering amid the elements of knowledge, without a single endeavor to extend the field. Both methods result in the same end — total inaction, and cessation of all exertion; a state equally absurd & unnatural.

The man who becomes the dupe of every novelty that presents itself is a despicable character. He never accustoms his mind to reason for a moment on the propriety of any thing which he meets. He lists with credulous ear to the weakest suggestions of folly, & lends his ready assistance to every device which extravagant absurdity can invent. He is therefore obliged to change his opinion every day; & wavers about with every varying breze which crosses his path. We ourselves have been acquainted with men of this character. It mattered not what the subject was, whether in religion, politics, literature, or science, they believed what they last heard to the utter exclusion of every thing that had gone before; like the ignorant country judge, who was equally convinced

by the arguments of both sides, and decided in favor of the one which he heard depended last. In religion, if they hear a doctrine, however contradictory, incoherent, & absurd, plausibly defended, they immediately forget every thing they had learnt previously, and become enthusiastically attached to it, till another preacher convinces them that an hypothesis directly contrary is true. In politics, they follow the same course. In literature, they cry up every new author, to the prejudice of all his predecessors without exception. In science and art, if any pretender consults them on some mock-discovery, they listen to him, as if he were gifted with supernatural powers; — whether his discovery be that of a new system of the universe, or of the perpetual motion, or of a new method of making Soda water,

they make no distinction in the degree of their credulity.

We have also, in the course of our peregrinations, become acquainted with men, who had such a stupid reverence for antiquity, as to have their minds perfectly clouded. We have seen them poring over the ~~ra~~ remains of ages long since fled, with an ardor which increases on them with their years. A musty manuscript has ten times the value to them of the finest edition that ever honored the disciples of Faustus. A brick, scrawled over with uncouth figures, has been palmed upon them for a part of the wall of Babylon, although a few weeks since it was but common clay. They presume to determine, in solemn dulness, the merits of every thing human; & set down, with supercilious contempt, as altogether unworthy of

notice or esteem, every production of modern mind or ingenuity.

But we are beginning to grow tired of the contemplation of such characters. It only serves to degrade humanity in our ideas. We would rather look at man as an elevated ~~being~~ being, conscious of his powers and emulous of exertion; as rising majestically upon the waves of time, & ~~floating~~ gaining vigor & glory as he floats along their waters. We would behold him, with the torch of experience, exploring undiscovered darkness, and calling to light the unimproved wilderness of ignorance. We would see him conquering in the majesty of his intellect, and in the plenitude of his faculties, every obstacle to improvement.

Though in fact antiquity is but the infancy of man, yet we

ought to regard it in a different light. We ought to look back to it as the source from which have flown all the streams of knowledge; as the little but beautiful rill, whose waves sparkled on the eye, and delighted the beholder, and which, when it had left its mountain origin, expanded into deep and glorious rivers. It was reserved for modern improvement to widen their channels, & mark their mighty current; then why should we dispraise the one, or despise the other?

E.